Amateur Radio Newsline(tm) Report 1622 - September 12, 2008

Amateur Radio Newsline report number 1622 with a release date of Friday, September 12th, 2008 to follow in 5-4-3-2-1.

The following is a QST. The sun stays silent and so does High Frequency DX, ham radio prepares to face Hurricane Ike, South Africa may give its hams some new operating privileges, Russia considers joining the pan-European CEPT licensing scheme, and a report on this years World Radiosport championship games. All this and more coming your way on Amateur Radio Newsline(tm) report number 1622 as we begin right now.

(Billboard Cart Here)

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RADIO SCIENCE: SOLAR OBSERVERS REPORT NO SUNSPOTS IN AUGUST

A new record has been set by the sun, but its not one that will make hams who need long range propagation very happy. Amateur Radio Newsline's Jeff Reinhardt, AA6JR, reports:

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Daily Tech dot com says that the sun has reached a milestone not seen for nearly 100 years. That being an entire month has passing without a single visible sunspot being recorded.

Sunspot data has been collected since 1749. According to statistics from Mount Wilson Observatory here in Los Angeles, the entire month of August passed without a spot being seen on the face of the sun. The last time such an event occurred was June of 1913.

When the sun is active, it's not uncommon to see sunspot numbers of 100 or more in a single month. Every 11 years, activity slows, and numbers briefly drop to near-zero. Normally sunspots return very quickly, as a new cycle begins. However, this year which corresponds to the predicted start of Solar Cycle 24 has been extraordinarily quiet, with the first seven months averaging a sunspot number of only 3. August followed with none at all.

The researchers say that the astonishing rapid drop of the past year has defied predictions, and caught nearly all astronomers by surprise. The event is significant since many since scientists who follow climate changes now believe solar magnetic activity or lack of it is an influencing factor for climate on earth.

For ham radio operators who depend on high solar activity to produce long communications paths, the silence on the High Frequency bands due to a lack of sunspot activity is all but deafening. As we go to air, no sunspots are reported as visible and the number of distant signals the average ham station can hear and work on most of the High Frequency bands remains at what is likely an all time low.

For the Amateur Radio Newsline, I'm Jeff Reinhardt, AA6JR, in Los Angeles.

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The complete article on the lack of solar activity and its effect on climactic change is on line at www.dailytech.com/Sun+Makes+History+First+Spotless+Month+in+a+Century/article12823.htm)
(Dailytech.com, others)

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RESTRUCTURING: NEW RSA BANDPLAN FAVORS ZS HAMS

Proposed changes in South Africa's allocation table for radio spectrum use could mean more operating privileges for Zed-S hams. Jim Meachen, ZL2BHF, has the details:

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On July 22nd, South Africa's telecommunications regulator published the revised table of frequency allocations, a process that is mandated by that nations Electronic Communication Act. The proposed South African table includes the expansion of the 40 meter band to 7 200 kHz as well as a new low frequency allocation from 135 point 7 to 137.8 kHz in the long wave spectrum. Also the limitation that currently exists for Zed R prefix hams in the 14 MHz band has been removed. The South African table of frequency allocations also include an interesting grant for use by radio amateurs in the 40 MHz band. The frequencies 40 point 675 to 40 point 685 MHz may be used for propagation studies with a maximum power limit of 10 Watt EIRP, but limited to Zed S prefix licensees.

The South Africa Radio League has reviewed the proposal and has made a formal suggestion to the nations telecommunications regulator concerning 160 Meters. SARL would like to have the 160 meter band expanded to 2 point zero MHz. It also would like to see a new allocation in the 5 MHz spectrum.

SARL has also addressed spectrum needs in the 2 300 to 2 450 MHz microwave ham band and also an allocation in the 3300 to 3 500 MHz band. It says that this would align South Africa with other parts of the world where this band is being considered for amateur satellite use. This allocation is not generally allocated in ITU region one except in some individual CEPT countries who have an allocation for amateur satellites in the 3400 to 3410 MHz band.

Reporting from down under in Auckland, New Zealand, I'm Jim Meachen, ZL2BHF, for the Amateur Radio Newsline.

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The next step is for the South African governments telecommunications agency to review all the comments received and to hold public hearings if it feels that they are required. Once the final table has been agreed, it will be published in the Government Gazette together with the date of when the new table will replace the old one. In the meantime. South Africa hams are advised that this is all still a proposal. All current South African ham radio regulations and allocations remain in force. (SARL)

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WORLDBEAT - RUSSIA: CEPT LICENSING MAY BE ON ITS WAY

Russia may be on the verge of signing on to the pan-European CEPT ham radio licensing scheme. According to information supplied by Mitch Wolfson, DJ0QN, a working committee in that nation recently held a workshop to prepare a draft recommendation to the State Commission on radio frequencies. In it, the committee recommends joining the T/T 61-01 agreement for reciprocal licensing in 2009.

The only objection came from those concerned with issues of national security, but the proposal worked out seems to satisfy Russia's Federal Security Service and its expected that the proposal will move forward into the Russian rulers making process. More information in the Russian language is at hwww.srr.ru. (DJ0QN)

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RESCUE RADIO: MARS OFFERS COMMUNICATIONS TO STORM FAMILES

A message of support for military families from MARS. Captain Jeff Hammer, N9NIC, who represents the Army Military Affiliate Radio System in Iraq, has appealed to the families of troops deployed overseas that have been affected by the recent tropical storms and hurricanes to let their loved ones know all is well at home.

According to Hammer, there are a lot of soldiers from the Gulf States here in Iraq and their families may be impacted by the hurricanes and not have a way to communicate with their soldier to let them know their status in the coming weeks. He says that if you are unable to deliver hurricane-related Health and Welfare messages from a family member to a service member in Iraq due to lack of communication assets or insufficient address information, send them directly through an Amateur Radio operator or Military Affiliate Radio System operator. He says that MARS operators currently deployed in Iraq will do their best to get all messages delivered immediately.

Hammer adds that Army MARS also can handle messages to service members in Afghanistan, but delivery may be delayed. A direct entry MARSgram form is available at www.mymars.org. The site provides full instructions and a message form that will be transmitted automatically via the Army MARS system. (MARS)

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BREAK 1

 From the United States of America, We are the Amateur Radio Newsline, heard on bulletin stations around the world including the N2OBS Echolink node in Summerville, South Carolina

(5 sec pause here)

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RESCUE RADIO: HAMS MAKE READY FOR HURRICANE IKE

Ham radio operators along Texas eastern shore are preparing for the onslaught of hurricane Ike. The storm that spent two days ravaging Cuba is now in the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Bill Pasternak, WA6ITF, has more:

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As this newscast is prepared on Thursday, September 11th, Ike is a Category 3 hurricane packing winds in excess of 130 miles per hour. It is moving West-North West at between 8 and 10 miles per hour with landfall predicted early on Saturday the 13th somewhere along the south-Texas coastline between Brownsville and Houston.

In anticipation of Ike, the ARRL and its South Texas Section have made large scale preparations to provide any needed communications. And according to Allen Pitts, W1AGP, who is the ARRL headquarters Media and Public Relations Director in Newington, the League has already sent emergency radio equipment into the area to pre-position gear for deployment. Also, plans are in place for bringing in radio amateurs from their states and regions if needed. Pitts adds that coordination is also in place with the Red Cross, Salvation Army, Baptist Men's kitchens, many Emergency Operations Centers and other relief agencies.

The ARRL has also established a pair of e-mail addresses for hams to use to pose questions or relay non-emergency information to the headquarters staff relating to hurricanes or named tropical storm events. If you need to communicate with headquarters regarding storms like Ike, please use hurricane@arrl.org or hurricane@arrl.net. While these e-mail addresses are not monitored on a 24/7 basis, they are checked during each storm's descent on the US, as well as throughout the hurricane season.

Also on alert a numerous severe weather related networks. The Hurricane Watch Net will be operational primarily on 14.325 Mhz. Also playing a major role will be the Voice over Internet Protocol Weather Net that links together repeaters and individual stations using VoIP technology.

For the Amateur Radio Newsline, I'm Bill Pasternak, WA6ITF, at the studio in Los Angeles.

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Hurricane Ike is a developing story. We will have more on it and the role of ham radio in next weeks Amateur Radio Newsline report. (ARNewsline(tm), ARRL, others)

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RESCUE RADIO: HAM RADIO WAS READY FOR HURRICANE HANNA

Packing winds gusts over 70 miles per hour, Hurricane Hanna, hit the United States on Saturday, September 6th at the border of North Carolina and

South Carolina. But Amateur radio operators involved in emergency communications were ready for whatever the storm might pack, including the possibility that Hanna might spawn some tornadoes:

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Net Audio
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That was Jim Sellars, N0UAM, in control of the Voice over Internet Protocol Weather Net. He was putting out a warning from the National Weather Service that tornadic activity accompanying hurricane Hanna was possible.

Thankfully, Hanna caused minimal damage to coastal areas of the Carolinas as it moved North-North East at 28 miles per hour. According to the U.S. National Hurricane Center the storm did dump as much as 10 inches of rain as it meandered up the Eastern U-S. coast.

Before making landfall on U-S soil, hurricane Hanna devastated Haiti, which also was hit by Hurricane Gustav and Tropical Storm Fay in the past month. Hanna reportedly killed about 495 people in Haiti. United Nations humanitarian affairs chief John Holmes says that as many as 600,000 people may need assistance in that nation. (ARNewsline(tm))

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ENFORCEMENT: FCC ORDERS FORM TO STOP SELLING GPS JAMMERS

A merchandiser of GPS jamming devices has been issued an official Citation by the FCC. Amateur Radio Newsline's Bruce Tennant, K6PZW, has the details:

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In its September 8th notice to MicroVideoX, LLC of Grand Junction, Colorado, and owner Greg Marston, the regulatory agency alleges that a letter of inquiry dated last June 3rd the FCC initiated an investigation into whether MicroVideoX, LLC is marketing in the United States unauthorized radio frequency devices. Specifically, the GPS Counter Track, and the GPS Counter Track Portable.

The Commission says it found evidence that MicroVideoX, LLC was selling these devices through several sources including eBay. Also that it was running demonstration videos of them on YouTube dot com.

In its response to the June inquiry, MicroVideoX stated that it had imported a total of 53 GPS Counter Track units and 24 GPS Counter Track Portable units. Of these it had sold approximately 48 units. Also that it had marketed the devices on eBay and YouTube.com only until about March 13th.

But the FCC says that it observed the promotional video still active at another website as late as July 11th. This one called www.revver.com.

The bottom line. The FCC has ordered MicroVideoX to immediately cease the advertising and sale of these devices. It says that if after receipt of the citation, MicroVideoX violates the Communications Act or the

Commission's Rules in any manner, that the Commission may impose monetary forfeitures not to exceed $11,000 for each such violation or each day of a continuing such a violation.

For the Amateur Radio Newsline, I'm Bruce Tennant, K6PZW, in Los Angeles.

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MicroVideoX, LLC appears to be complying with the FCC edict. A check of eBay for a GPS jammer shows that currently no United States based company is advertising such a device there. However there are others outside the U-S with ads on eBay for similar devices and these companies claim that they ship, worldwide. (FCC)

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RADIO THEFT: RADIO TOWER STOLEN IN PA

Scrap metal thieves have gotten more brazen this time trucking away a complete 120 foot high radio tower near Windbar, Pennsylvania.

According to news reports, police believe the thieves threw cables over the tower guy wires and yanked it down with a truck. They say that they also found cut bolts and torch marks on nearby grass.

Authorities believe the thieves then cut into smaller pieces in order to get it out of the wooded area, but they can't figure out how they did it without anybody noticing.

The tower hasn't been used for years, but the family who owns it was in talks with a company to use it to bring wireless Internet service to the Windber area. The thieves also got away with a 300 pound transformer full of copper. (Published reports)

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EMI ENFORCEMENT: TEXAS POLICE RADIO INTERFERES WITH WATER SPRINKLERS

A new emergency radio system serving a couple of Texas towns is causing a rather watery problem for its neighbors. John Williams, VK5BUI, tries to dry it all out.

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All was going well with the testing of a new police communication system in the Texas cities of Cedar Hill, DeSoto and Duncanville, until it was found to be producing an unwanted side-effect in the city of Plano some 30 miles away.

The police transmissions have been setting off an expensive network of radio-controlled sprinklers used for parks and road median strips. Worse still, the issue took on a life of its own through radio talk-back programs and other media outlets trying to point blame for the technical hitch.

Then came news that the new emergency system also interfered with radio

equipment that monitored the levels of three water towers. Attempts to find a mutually agreed solution appear to have failed so it is off to the Federal Communications Commission for a determination. 'm John, VK5BUI.

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With matters such as the switchover to digital broadcasting and other important items on its immediate agenda, it will be interesting to see how the FCC the FCC reacts to this wet request. (WIA News)

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RADIO EDUCATION: LCWO TEACHES MORSE ONB THE WEB

LCWO.net is a new website to learn and practice Morse telegraphy. Called Learn CW Online all you need for using LCWO is a web browser. This gives the user the opportunity to practice CW wherever an internet connection is available. It also lets users retain their personal settings, scores and statistics. Check it out at LCWO.net on the World Wide Web. (WebNews)

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THE SOCIAL SCENE: PEORIA SUPERFEST TURNS 50

A word of congratulations to the Peoria Superfest which celebrates its 50th year as it holds forth September 20th to the 21st at the Exposition Gardens in Peoria, Illinois. The Peoria Superfest is a combined ARRL sanctioned hamfest, computer show and flea market that began back in 1958. More abut this years 50th anniversary event is on-line at www.peoriasuperfest.com. (WA9VRH)

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SPECIAL EVENT: COMMEMORATING KATRINA AND RITA

The SouthEast Louisiana Amateur Radio Club will conduct a special event station to commemorate the third anniversaries of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.. The operation will take place on Saturday , September 13th from 1400 to 2000 UTC with stations on 7.250. and 14.250 Mhz. QSL to Scott Hernandez, K5R 957 Nancy St. Mandeville, Louisiana 70448. (SELARC)

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SPECIAL EVENTS: POW-MIA RECOGNITION DAY

California's Anaheim Police Amateur Radio Club will operate special event station K6P from September 18th to the 21st. This, in remembrance of POW-MIA Recognition Day

POW and MIA are acronyms for "Prisoner of War" and "Missing in Action" and refer to members of the military who have served the nation and have served our nation. Operation will be on SSB on 40 throuh 15 meters along with PSK-31 and RTTY on their appropriate frequencies.

QSL with a self addressed stamoed envelope to KM6HB: Mark McMullen, P.O.Box

27271, Santa Ana, California, 92799 (Southgate)

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BREAK 2

This is ham radio news for today's radio amateur. From the United States of America, We are the Amateur Radio Newsline with links to the world from our only official website at www.arnewsline.org and being relayed by the volunteer services of the following radio amateur:

(5 sec pause here)

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EMERGING TECHNOLOGY: WILMINGTON NC GOES ALL DIGITAL TV

Residents of Wilmington, North Carolina became the first in the nation to experience the transition to digital television. This, as the city's full service television stations shut off their analog transmitters and went all digital all the time. Amateur Radio Newsline's Don Carlson, KQ6FM, reports:

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The change took place at noon, Eastern Standard time on Monday, September the 8th. That's when FCC Chairman Kevin Martin flanked by local broadcasters flipped a symbolic eight-foot high switch during a ceremony in downtown Wilmington as a way to signify the new era of TV was about to begin.

Wilmington broadcasters had volunteered to make the switch to digital operation five months ahead of the February 17th 2009 deadline Congress set for the rest of the nation. This, as a way to test the new ATSC digital system before it goes national. The test is intended to give the FCC as well as broadcasters and consumers in other markets a better idea of how to ensure the 2009 switch to digital goes smoothly.

In general it did go pretty well. FCC officials on scene did say they received several hundred calls from local residents, some of whom were not aware that the switch had taken place even though it had been widely advertised for months. Others were simply having trouble hooking up digital television converters to their analog sets.

FCC staff members planned to remain in the area for several days. This, to help resolve any further problems residents might have with setting up converter boxes and finding the right antennas.

Wilmington, North Carolina is the 135th largest television market in the United States, with about 180,000 television households across five counties. However, only about 7 percent of those households rely on over the air analog broadcasts, compared with a national average of about 13 percent. This made it the ideal test bed for a full scale trial of the new all A-T-S-C all-digital broadcast television system.

For the Amateur Radio Newsline, I'm Don Carlson, KQ6FM in Reno.

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As previously reported, Congress mandated the switch to digital to free up spectrum for new wireless services. Off-air viewers will need to get a converter box or upgrade to a digital TV set. Cable and satellite TV subscribers should not notice a difference as any digital conversion is handled by the delivery provider. (Adapted from various published reports)

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HAM RADIO IN SPACE: AO-16 ON FOR NOW IN BENT PIPE MODE

The temperature on board the AMSAT Oscar 16 ham satellite has come up enough so that the watchdog timing problem has gone away. On September 1st, Amsat North America Vice President for Operations, Drew Glassbrenner, KO4MA, turned the satellite on. He then and commanded it into bent pipe mode. As a result, AO-16 now operates as a cross mode, cross band voice repeater, with an uplink on 145.920 FM. The downlink is reduced carrier AM, similar to double sideband, on 437.026. Most stations find receiving the downlink on USB works best.

Work is continuing to predict how long this latest period of operation may last, but initial estimates are around 2-3 months total. There may not be another opportunity to use AO-16 after this one. This is because the satellite will generally head towards longer eclipses and lower temperatures for several years. (ANS)

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WORLDBEAT - EUROPE: NI-CAD BATTERIES TO BE BANNED IN EUROPE

Ni-Cad batteries will soon be a thing of the past in Europe. On September 26th a new Europen Union directive comes into force preventing the importation of Ni-Cad and certain other batteries into Europe.

In April of 2004 the European parliament voted to ban Nickel-Cadmium batteries based on them being an ecological hazard. At that time the parliament also adopted restrictions on the use of lead in batteries. It says the lead content can be fully replaced by environmentally preferable Alkaline Manganese batteries.

And what about the impact of this ban on ham radio gear? According to information from Icom U-K, Ni-Cd batteries for their equipment will only be available until its stocks are exhausted. Icom says that alternative types of battery for current equipment have been available for some time, so there should be no problem in finding an substitute.

But Icom U-K says that for older equipment where Ni-Cd was the only type of battery available, replacements may not be available. (Southgate, European Public Health Alliance)

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CONTEST CALANDER: CQ WW DX CONTESTS IN OCTOBER

Turning to news from the world of radio sporting, word that the 2008 CQ World Wide DX Contests take place the last two weekends next month.. The phone portion of the contest is October 25th to the 26th while the C-W event is October 29th to the 30th. Both contests run from 0000 U-T-C on Saturday to 2400 U-T-C on Sunday. More information and complete contest rules can be found beginning on page 94 of the September issue of CQ Magazine or on the web at www.cq-amateur-radio.com. (DXNL)

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CONTEST CALANDER: 2007 SEPT VHF CONTEST CERTIFICATES MAILED OUT

Also, ARRL Contest Branch Manager Sean Kutzko, KX9X Certificates for the 2007 September VHF QSO Party have been mailed out. Certificate winners should receive them just in time to use as motivation to do well in the 2008 running of the same event. (VHF Reflector)

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DX

In DX, word that the DX Magazine's 2008 Most Wanted Survey is now up and ready to collect data on the publications website. The publishers are encouraging those interested to submit their needed countries lists to because this is the primary survey that DXpedition planners use to decide where to go. To cast your votes go to www.dxpub.com and click on 2008 survey. The results will be published in the January/February 2009 issue of The DX Magazine.

On the air, listen out for EA7ATX and EA7AY operating as HK1AT from Columbia for the next several weeks. An activation of San Bernardo Island is planned for September 14th through 19th. QSL direct only via EA7ATX.

The SV-DX-Group will be active from Limnos Island in Northern Aaegaein through mid-September as SY8L. Listen out for them on 160 through 8 meters using all modes. QSL via SV2DGH.

A team of 8 Korean operators will be active from Tok Island in the Sea of Japan between September 13th to the 18th. They will be using the special call D9D. QSL as directed on the air,

Lastly, DL7UFN and DL7VEE will operate from Paraguay portable Zed-P-6 through the 14th of January 2009. The pair will hit the airwaves in the capital Asuncion on 160 through 10 meters using CW, SSB, RTTY and PSK at the station facilities of ZP5AZL. QSLs via their home calls, either direct or via the bureau.

(Above from various DX news sources)

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THAT FINAL ITEM: THE 2008 WORLD ARDF CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES

And finally this week, the 2008 summer Olympics are over and so is this year's world championships of radio direction finding games. And in the

latter team USA brought home a medal. Newsline's Joe Moell K0OV has the details:

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Members of ARDF Team USA are returning from the 14th World Championships of Amateur Radio Direction Finding, held in a resort community near Seoul, Korea. Ten competitors from 7 states, plus two officials and a visitor, traveled to Korea to take on about 330 competitors from two dozen other countries. As always, the eastern European and former Soviet bloc countries took most of the awards, but this year, for the first time, a North American team member medaled in one of the five age divisions for males. It was George Neal KF6YKN, who won a bronze medal in the category for men ages 50-59 during the two meter competition on September 4. He found all four of his required transmitters in 1:23:42, about five minutes longer than the gold medal winner took. The route he chose was a little over six kilometers long.

USA has been represented at the biennial ARDF World Championships since 1998 and our performance continues to improve, thanks to an increasing number of training sessions around the country. This is the second consecutive World Championships in which the USA has brought home a medal. At the World Championships in the forests of Bulgaria in 2006, Nadia Scharlau of North Carolina won bronze in the 80-meter contest.

As the team members return home, more photos and results are becoming available. See the latest at the "Homing In" Web site, www.homingin.com, where you will also learn how you and your family can begin enjoying the fun of on-foot hidden transmitter hunting. That's homingin, as one word, homingin.com.

From southern California, where we will welcome the team members back with a special ARDF event for beginners and experts on September 20, this is Joe Moell, K-zero-O-V for Amateur Radio Newsline.

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Our congratulations to all who took part in this years Amateur Radio Direction Finding world championship games. (K0OV)

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NEWSCAST CLOSE

With thanks to Alan Labs, AMSAT, the ARRL, the CGC Communicator, CQ Magazine, the FCC, the Ohio Penn DX Bulletin, Radio Netherlands, Rain, the RSGB, the Southgate News and Australia's W-I-A News, that's all from the Amateur Radio Newsline(tm). Our e-mail address is newsline@arnewsline.org. More information is available at Amateur Radio Newsline's(tm) only official website located at www.arnewsline.org. You can also write to us or support us at Amateur Radio Newsline(tm), P.O. Box 660937,
Arcadia, California 91066.

For now, with Bill Pasternak, WA6ITF, at the editors desk, I'm Jeff Clark, K8JAC, saying 73 and we thank you for listening.

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